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FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
30th meeting
held on
Thursday, 11 November 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUKAN (Slovakia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 108: RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued)

(b) EFFECTIVE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH AUTONOMY (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 110: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/48/3 (Chap. VII.C), A/48/38, A/48/98, A/48/124-S/25506, A/48/182, A/48/187-E/1993/76, A/48/279, 301, 338, 354, 359, 413 and 513; A/C.3/48/L.5)

1. Mrs. MONGELLA (Assistant Secretary-General and Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women), speaking on behalf of the Secretariat concerning the documentation on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), said that following the adoption of Economic and Social Council decision 1993/235 and a first review by the Secretariat of the administrative, financial and legal implications of that decision, the Secretary-General had written to the President of the Dominican Republic seeking the cooperation of the Dominican authorities in pursuing the matter. Consultations between the latter and representatives of the Secretary-General had subsequently been undertaken. The Dominican authorities had agreed to the delayed issuance of the Secretary-General's document and the change in date of consideration of the report in order to allow their views to be taken fully into account.

2. The Dominican Republic, after submitting a revised position paper, had requested the Secretariat to refrain from issuing that paper as a document of the General Assembly pending the outcome of the consultations; those consultations were still under way, and no contrary notification had been given to the Secretariat. Unless otherwise indicated by the Dominican authorities, the Secretariat would proceed immediately to issue their paper and the Secretary-General's report. Any factual clarifications called for in the Dominican position paper would be set out in a further Secretariat note. The Secretariat would make every effort to conclude the consultations with the Dominican authorities on substantive issues in a mutually satisfactory manner.

3. Mrs. ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) stressed that her Government had not been officially notified of Economic and Social Council decision 1993/235 until 5 October. As a sovereign Member State, her country would not yield to the threats made by a representative of the Secretariat to the effect that it would suffer serious financial consequences if it failed to support the proposed merger between INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

4. The premises occupied by INSTRAW had been donated by the Government of the Dominican Republic; the United Nations was not, therefore, in a position to reassign those premises. The allegations made by the Secretariat required an immediate official response that could not wait until the matter was debated in the Committee. To that end, she requested a copy of the statement just made by the Secretary-General of the Conference.

5. Mrs. PILOTO (Zimbabwe) said that since gaining independence, Zimbabwe had made commendable efforts to promote gender equality in the legal, social and corporate life of the country. Women held high-level positions in government and in the diplomatic, academic and legal fields. A ministry responsible for women's affairs had been established and legislation had been passed to

(Mrs. Piloto, Zimbabwe)

safeguard women's right to property and inheritance. Women who performed as well as their male counterparts were given preference for promotions or placement in public service posts.

6. In education, a specific percentage of scholarships was reserved for girls. Her delegation appreciated the scholarships that had been offered by foreign Governments to help women in Zimbabwe acquire skills at home and abroad. The United Nations, with eight agencies headed by women, had set a good example for States to follow. Despite progress, however, male dominance remained entrenched. Gender stereotyping was experienced by women in her country, as in others. Government efforts to establish independent mechanisms to deal with harassment and other misconduct had produced results. Men in Zimbabwe were beginning to accept women as equal partners in development.

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/48/187) provided useful insight into the problems faced by rural women and how to address them. However, the report made reference to a sharp increase in the incidence of poverty among rural women, and stated that a gender dimension helped to explain why and how the situation of women and men differed in rural areas. That statement, though well reasoned, lacked a definition of the cultural context of such a situation. The traditional African family derived its status from the family head. Husbands and fathers acquired wealth not for themselves, but for their families. Therefore, the concept of the feminization of poverty might apply to widowed women who had become the heads of families, but not to traditional families.

8. It was essential to bear that in mind when proposing programmes and recommendations. For example, to an observer, every rural household without a wage income would be considered extremely poor, yet the same household could be considered rich within that culture. Consequently, programmes should be devised to include both men and women, rather than being antagonistic to the traditional position of the male, thereby destroying the family structure of the very societies that were intended to benefit.

9. With regard to professional women, promotion to high positions should not be an end in itself. Sex discrimination at the workplace was rampant: faced with male resentment, such women were subjected to discriminatory practices, making it difficult for them to perform. The United Nations system should provide follow-up programmes for professional women in positions of authority. Studies should be conducted to help women in the corporate world improve their networking skills, promote activities in professional organizations and devise confidence-building measures. With regard to women and the media, a comprehensive approach involving the education of society as a whole and programmes to develop legal literacy for women would improve their status.

10. Her delegation urged all Governments to treat the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women with the seriousness that it deserved. While ensuring that women were fully represented at the Conference, men should not be left out completely, otherwise they would never understand the changes women were advocating. Disregarding the concept of gender equality in dealing with gender issues would only perpetuate the stereotype images of women that continued to be witnessed today.

11. Mrs. KABBAJ (Morocco) said that the progress already attained in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 should not allow other, adverse factors to be overlooked; for instance, the conflict between reforms aimed at advancing the position of women and deep-rooted cultural traditions and attitudes was a frequent stumbling block. Other major obstacles also impeded efforts to bridge the equality gap. Attitudes needed to evolve with a view to creating a favourable socio-cultural environment where the sharing of rights, duties and responsibilities between the sexes was the norm. Her delegation therefore welcomed the outcome of the recent Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, where it had been declared that women's rights would be upgraded to the same status as human rights.

12. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women would allow progress to be made in eliminating discrimination against women and liberating them from intolerable injustice. In that spirit, Morocco had already taken steps to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which it had acceded in mid-1993. It had also helped to formulate the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5).

13. The correlation between development and the advancement of women was clear. As women should be involved at all stages of development on an equal basis with men, it was crucial to ward off the threat of adverse economic conditions, which had substantially reduced the pace of their advancement in some countries, particularly in Africa. In that respect, the ability of the public sector to provide various services related to the advancement of women was limited by scanty resources.

14. Women were also the victims of poverty, illness and illiteracy, all of which posed further obstacles to their advancement. Recognizing women's education as the key factor in improving socio-economic conditions, Morocco had focused efforts since its independence on ensuring that girls received the same education as boys. Equally aware of the importance of vocational training, it had also instituted a highly successful programme aimed at instructing girls with an eye to job-market requirements, as well as similarly successful literacy campaigns. Furthermore, it had improved women's health services and now ran annual vaccination campaigns for both women and children. Finally, she cited as evidence of Morocco's firm will to follow the route of democracy and respect for human rights the appointment of women for the first time ever in 1993 to her country's Chamber of Representatives.

15. Mr. KONIG (Commission of the European Communities), speaking on behalf of the European Community, said that the current medium-term action programme on equal opportunities for women and men guided the work of the European Commission in the field of equal opportunities. The first priority area was the legal framework. The Commission was encouraging better use of the impressive body of legislation that it had built up over the years, specifically to give women more confidence and ensure that lawyers were familiar with the relevant legislation. Since the gap between men's and women's pay remained wide, the Commission had drafted a memorandum on equal pay for work of equal value which gave guidance on how to design fair job evaluation and implement that fundamental principle.

(Mr. Konig)

16. The second priority was the integration of women in the labour market, at all levels of seniority, and in all types of employment. It was generally recognized that one of the greatest barriers to the full integration of women into the labour market was the difficulty in finding good child care. The Commission would soon publish a guide that contained practical suggestions regarding services, leave arrangements, workplace practices and greater involvement of men in the upbringing of children. At present, women undertook most family responsibilities. In fact, the reconciliation of work and family life should ideally involve both parents and benefit both parents. Various conferences had been organized to explore that issue.

17. The third priority was the improvement of the status of women in society. Recent conferences and seminars on women had shown that there was a serious lack of input from women at senior levels of decision-making and had affirmed the need to achieve a balanced distribution of public and political power between women and men. Women were being encouraged to play a more active part in politics, especially in view of the European parliamentary elections to be held in 1994. With regard to employment, women were too often working in low-paying jobs that were especially vulnerable in a recession. The Commission was developing initiatives to ensure that equal opportunity was accorded particular attention.

18. The policy on women in development was aimed at ensuring the full integration of women, both as agents and beneficiaries, into the mainstream of development. Through its related activities, the Commission sought to enhance the status of women, improve their living conditions, widen their social and economic role and promote their participation in development on an equal footing with men. Women should be given access to land, employment, advanced technologies and funding; their access to training and education should also be facilitated. Well aware of the impetus that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had given to the pursuit of equality between women and men, the Commission was at work on its own preparations for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.

19. Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) noted that women's status and their social and economic environment were closely linked; women could be liberated politically and enjoy quality of life only after their economic and social conditions had improved substantially. Efforts for the advancement of women in the world should be combined with efforts to maintain world peace and promote economic development and social progress.

20. His country had always attached importance to the advancement of women and adhered to the principle of equality between men and women. Chinese women played an important role in the management of State affairs, economic development, science and technology and social progress. Two main tasks for the next five years were to promote women's full participation in the reform and modernization programme and raise their legal awareness. A national conference on women recently held in Beijing had set objectives to be achieved by the end of the century, namely, to enhance public awareness of women's rights, increase women's participation in all spheres of life and punish those guilty of violence against women.

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

21. As host country to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, China invited all delegations to come to Beijing and jointly seek ways to improve the status of women. His Government had accomplished significant preparatory work for the Conference. Through the mass media, it had raised the Chinese people's awareness of the importance of the Conference and women's issues in general. The sites and facilities for the Conference and the NGO Forum had been inspected and approved by the planning mission headed by the Secretary-General of the Conference. Chinese women had been encouraged to participate in workshops with United Nations bodies involved in women's issues in order to get a better understanding of United Nations conferences. People in China were anxious to pursue close cooperation in the preparatory work with the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other countries to ensure the success of the Conference.

22. The Platform for Action, the basic structure of which had been approved by the Commission on the Status of Women, should continue to make equality, development and peace its ultimate objectives, represent the rights and interests of women in all countries and, especially in developing countries, help them solve their main problems by formulating practical measures that were easy to implement. Lastly, the Chinese Government fully supported the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) recommended for adoption by the General Assembly and urged those countries that had not done so to accede as soon as possible to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

23. Mrs. SAHLI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that poor economic conditions and lack of resources in many countries, particularly in the developing world, prevented proper implementation of the various plans and programmes related to women's issues which had been instituted through the efforts of United Nations bodies. As a result, the desired improvement in the status of women had not been achieved. In view of the sizeable contribution of women to agriculture and food production, training programmes in rural areas should be restructured to enable women to acquire the skills needed in modern agriculture and industry. The recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/48/187) could serve as a guide in that connection.

24. High priority should be given to the education and training of women in the developing countries, failing which they could not be integrated into development or make the contribution of which they were capable. Commending the work of INSTRAW, UNIFEM and UNDP in helping the developing countries to establish programmes aimed at women, she hoped that their efforts would continue, particularly in assisting specific categories of women, such as minorities, refugees, prison inmates and so forth, whose problems required greater emphasis and concern.

25. In preparing for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, which her delegation welcomed, the Commission on the Status of Women should take into account the close relationship between the objectives of that Conference and those of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, as well as draw up a

(Mrs. Sahli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

practical plan for implementing the remainder of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies by using individual country reports to identify obstacles to its implementation.

26. It should also specify the measures to be taken by the developed countries and international financial institutions with a view to achieving the objectives set forth in the Strategies, and arrange a programme of seminars aimed at highlighting issues affecting women and restricting their contribution to development. Her country would actively participate in the preparations for the Conference and had already formed a national committee for that purpose. Meanwhile, the United Nations Department of Public Information should strengthen awareness of the Conference slogan, namely "Action for equality, development and peace", with a view to gaining public support for programmes aimed at women.

27. Her country urged those States which had not yet done so to accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. More important still was its implementation, including recognition of women's rights and their participation in decision-making in all fields. In that connection, she hoped that the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) would be adopted at the current session. On another note, her delegation called for intensified efforts to increase the proportion of women in senior positions in the United Nations Secretariat by 1995 in line with the decisions taken on that matter.

28. In Libya, which attached great importance to women, laws had been enacted to safeguard women's rights and their participation in economic, social and political decision-making, while a new high-level post had recently been created in the General People's Congress to cover all aspects of women's affairs. Liaison offices had also been established throughout the country with the aim of improving the overall situation of women and thus enabling them to contribute towards building society in Libya. In conclusion, she affirmed her country's commitment to participating actively in the preparations for the Fourth World Conference with a view to fully implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

29. Mrs. GHIMIRE (Nepal) said that the subordination of women in most developing countries was so complete that they did not even have an identity of their own. Women in Asian society grew up in a socio-cultural environment based on the principle of patriarchy. There was a conflict therefore between the constitutional guarantees of equality and the real traditional and cultural status of women. If freedom of choice and equality between the genders were important for human development, it could be said that women in Asia had always been "oppressed". The birth of a male child was celebrated in most homes, whereas a female child was considered a burden to the family and faced a life of constant struggle for survival. There was a need for massive adult-literacy programmes to eliminate old social beliefs that discriminated against women and to change attitudes with regard to the status of women.

30. As everywhere else in the world, women worked harder than men in Nepal. The problems of malnutrition, infant and maternal mortality, child marriage, discrimination, and abuse and neglect by husbands characterized their condition.

(Mrs. Ghimire, Nepal)

Recognition of the human rights of women, particularly in a least-developed country like Nepal, was a major political issue requiring the immediate attention of Governments.

31. Her country's democratic leaders had made the advancement of women a major political objective. Since the restoration of democracy in 1990, the Nepalese Government had promoted the participation of women in politics, decision-making, higher education and employment; and women in her country were optimistic about conditions for their advancement.

32. In spite of efforts by Governments and non-governmental organizations, much remained to be done in order to eliminate trafficking in women and solving the problems of destitute and mentally-ill women, women prisoners and refugee women and children. Governments should attach priority to those problems and establish ministries of women's affairs to deal with them. While United Nations efforts to promote the advancement of women were on the right track, the progress achieved was not satisfactory. Her delegation hoped that the upcoming major international conferences would yield concrete results. There must be a policy to address the problems of the most oppressed and disadvantaged women as a matter of priority. Women in least-developed countries required assistance more urgently than those in developed countries in all respects. Lastly, she stressed the need to generate employment opportunities for rural women and empower women to participate in decision-making.

33. Mr. THOMPSON (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that all efforts leading up to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women should be directed towards ensuring its success and maximizing its impact on the status of women worldwide. It was encouraging that the planning mission to Beijing lead by the Secretary-General of the Conference had yielded positive results and that the representatives of non-governmental organizations had taken part in that mission. He noted with satisfaction that contributions had been pledged to the Trust Fund for preparatory activities for the Conference. The Fund should be used to assist national preparatory activities and to support the participation of representatives of developing countries and non-governmental organizations in the Conference and in preparations for it. He hoped that States in a position to do so would support the Trust Fund and other means to raise extrabudgetary resources for the Conference.

34. National reports on the review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies were the basis for preparatory activities at all levels. Those reports would provide inputs for the regional and global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Strategies, which was the most important item of the Conference's agenda. The Platform for Action for the Conference must be positive in its orientation, stressing the advantages accruing from women's equal participation, important advances made in that area and action to be taken for further progress. The Platform should be action-oriented, concise and written in language that was easily understood. The CARICOM countries supported the convening of an inter-sessional working group of the Commission on the Status of Women to develop the structure of the Platform for Action as well as the efforts to take a more strategic and concise approach to the system-wide

(Mr. Thompson, Jamaica)

medium-term plan for the advancement of women. He also supported procedures permitting the broadest participation of non-governmental organizations, particularly women's groups, in the Conference and the preparations.

35. There was a need to build on the discussion of the priority themes for the 1995 Conference in order to improve the general understanding of the problems of women and take decisive action to achieve equality of men and women. The pattern of unequal remuneration was universal, notwithstanding the ILO standards on equality of pay and the legislation adopted by many countries. Other familiar patterns such as the predominance of women in low-skilled, low-paying jobs and their absence from management and decision-making must be eliminated. The CARICOM States were pleased that a methodology was being developed to assist in the comparative evaluation of women's work, particularly in the informal sector. What was important to women must be brought to the attention of policy-makers. The work under way to improve statistics gathering and analysis augured well for the preparations for the World Conference. Improving the situation of women in urban areas required investment in education, training, job-generation programmes, health care and housing.

36. Women must be given equal opportunities to participate in development. CARICOM was encouraged that the resource base of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) continued to expand, that its programme-delivery rates were improving, and that its advocacy continued to bring a gender perspective to major international conferences and to the work of relevant United Nations agencies. The Fund's support for development programmes in the CARICOM region had contributed to empowerment of women in the region. The Caribbean Community supported the special focus given to the situation of rural women in order to remove obstacles to their full participation in development. There was a need to formulate and implement strategies to that end in order to improve their access to land, credit and other productive resources, water, health care and housing. Such strategies should focus on alleviating poverty among rural women.

37. The General Assembly should adopt the draft declaration on violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) elaborated by the Commission on the Status of Women. Governments and society must send an unequivocal message that domestic violence was a public matter and would not be tolerated. Eliminating violence against women was a priority for CARICOM Governments, many of which had taken legislative action to combat it. He noted with satisfaction that the recent World Conference on Human Rights had supported consideration by the Commission on Human Rights of the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women, and of the integration of women's human rights into the work of mainstream human-rights bodies.

38. It was particularly gratified to note the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Action should be taken to place that Committee on an equal footing with the other human-rights treaty bodies in terms of servicing and meeting time. He hoped that the call for universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000 would yield results and was pleased to report that all CARICOM States had ratified it.

(Mr. Thompson, Jamaica)

39. It continued to be a source of deep concern that equality of men and women had not been achieved in the United Nations Secretariat. Statistics as of mid-1993 indicated that much remained to be done in order to achieve the targets set for 1995. CARICOM fully supported the special measures to be taken to promote and recruit more women in the Secretariat when the hiring freeze was lifted, and stressed the need to give due attention to achieving a balance in the recruitment and promotion of women from developing and developed countries.

40. Mrs. APPELO (Netherlands) said that the women's movement in the Netherlands had been taking a keen interest in the restructuring of the United Nations and hoped that it would lead to greater decisiveness in implementing the Organization's policy on women. There was a need for more vigorous action in view of the growing feminization of poverty, migration and increased violence against women. The Division for the Advancement of Women had an important role to play in that connection, particularly in providing support to the Commission on the Status of Women in its more onerous duties. Her delegation therefore strongly endorsed Commission resolution 37/9 concerning the consequences of reorganization for the work programme on the advancement of women, and urged the Secretary-General to ensure that it was reflected in policy.

41. Although violence against women was not explicitly mentioned in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, today it was viewed as a serious violation of human rights, thanks mainly of the efforts of women's organizations to place that issue on the political agenda. In view of the fact that the recent Vienna Conference on Human Rights had stressed the universality of human rights, the Netherlands strongly urged Member States to reconsider the many reservations they had entered which were incompatible with the spirit of the Convention. Moreover, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) should be placed on an equal footing with other human-rights treaty bodies and its sessions should be extended from two to three weeks annually.

42. Her Government had recently completed its report on the implementation of the Convention; and the women's movement in the Netherlands had produced a shadow report on the same subject. It was crucial that the views of the non-governmental organizations should be heard as well. An effective procedure for submitting individual complaints concerning gender-specific violations of human rights was essential. The introduction of the right of petition through an optional protocol to the Convention, as called for by the World Conference on Human Rights, would be the most desirable solution. Her delegation was looking forward to a constructive debate on that topic at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women. In addition, increasing the effectiveness of the Commission's communications procedure could provide it and CEDAW with important information. Her delegation therefore strongly endorsed Economic and Social Council resolutions 1992/19 and 1993/11, and attached particular importance to the consideration by the Commission of implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action with regard to women's rights within the United Nations system. Accordingly, the Commission should consider that question and report to the Council at its 1994 session.

(Mrs. Appelo, Netherlands)

43. The Netherlands regarded the draft declaration on violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) as a way of reinforcing the Convention and hoped it would be adopted. The appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women would be a most positive step. He should, inter alia, consider the causes of violence against women and formulate recommendations to prevent it. More systematic information about gender-specific human-rights violations was essential.

44. The need to eliminate violence against women was underscored by the situation in the former Yugoslavia. It was of utmost importance that all persons suspected of using rape as an instrument of war should be brought before the International Tribunal established by the Security Council to try cases involving serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in that territory. In that connection, she expressed regret that, notwithstanding the availability of qualified candidates, the Secretary-General had not appointed a woman as Prosecutor. The women's movement in the Netherlands therefore requested the Security Council to appoint an advisory committee of women lawyers and experts in the field of counselling war victims and victims of sexual violence. Such a committee would be able to advise the judges on the Tribunal with regard to the gender-specific aspects of their work. Her delegation also attached importance to ensuring expertise in all echelons of the judicial apparatus to be set up in that regard.

45. A recent report published in Europe drew attention to the fact that the specific predicament of black migrant women, who were subjected to both sexism and racism, was often ignored. The women's movement in the Netherlands therefore urged the Commission on the Status of Women to consider the question of improving the lot of black migrant women and develop legal instruments to protect them. The related problem of improving the situation of victims of trafficking in women should be given high priority.

46. Recognition of sexual orientation to ensure protection against discrimination was a fundamental issue. The failure of United Nations legal instruments to offer protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation hampered the cause of lesbian women and of women in general. The awarding of official United Nations observer status to the International Lesbian and Gay Association was a small but significant step forward. Nevertheless, much work still had to be done. That topic should certainly be raised at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

47. In order to empower women, society needed to be transformed. To that end it was crucial to develop strategies for redistributing paid and unpaid labour between the sexes and for increasing the number of women in decision-making. The debate on the empowerment of women should be linked with the debate on sustainable development. Women must not be used as instruments in environmental issues; they must play an active role as individuals in need of empowerment to improve their socio-economic position.

48. Concerning the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Netherlands attached importance to national preparatory committees, financing for preparatory activities, and criteria for the admission to the Conference of non-governmental

(Mrs. Appelo, Netherlands)

organizations with no consultative status, since their participation in the Conference and the preparatory meetings was extremely valuable.

49. Mrs. ANSELMI (Italy) said that the new legislative measures designed to benefit women in her country had not been fully implemented. As a result of pressure exerted by women's movements, a new law had been passed providing for the establishment of a national commission for gender parity and equality. The task of another commission established under the Ministry of Education was to measure the integration of women's issues into the educational curriculum. Italian women must now go from the phase of demanding their rights to the phase of mobilizing all necessary resources to support the changes that had already taken place. Initially, the strengthening of women's presence in all sectors should be given top priority.

50. A national committee on equal opportunities in employment had also been set up under a new law that provided for the reversal of roles. It was now incumbent upon the employer to prove that he had not discriminated against women. Obviously, the strength and scope of the law depended on the presence of the trade unions. All those measures had been strengthened by a new law dealing with incentives for women's productive work in such areas as agriculture, handicrafts and small businesses. Indeed, an important change had taken place in recent years, with more and more women becoming managers of those businesses. But women must make sure that the current economic crisis was not used as an excuse to send them back to domestic work. The right to paid work must remain a right for all human beings, including women. Furthermore, women must be actively involved in important economic decisions.

51. Women's access to employment was closely linked to their role in the family: but a veritable cultural and political upheaval was needed to ensure that the family became the primary purpose of social policies. Attention must also be devoted to the problem of rural women.

52. Italian women were not satisfied with their low level of representation in institutions of power. In that connection, new electoral laws had been passed, and Parliament had welcomed some demands made by women for minimum quotas of representation in Parliamentary bodies. Women should not fear to take office. It was in the interest of all to eradicate age-old prejudices that had limited women's rights and refused to acknowledge their contribution to society. A change in families, schools and the mass media was needed.

53. Ms. DUCCI (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that social laws would be changed by changing gender relationships. In the long term, the success of international efforts could be measured only by their contribution to the creation of a new definition of development for both developing and industrialized countries as partners in the promotion of sustainable development at the global level. Employment was central to the goal of "development with a human face".

54. Countries of all categories were experiencing difficulties related to employment. The time had come to review the very concept of employment: the traditional concept had become irrelevant as the basis for development

(Ms. Ducci, ILO)

projections. In that regard, the women's informal sector could perhaps serve as a source of innovation. The positive and humane aspects of that more flexible system of work could be adopted; it would permit a better balance between private and public life, and between economic activities and family responsibilities for all workers, leading to a more equitable distribution of rights and duties between men and women with a corresponding benefit for society. That scheme could work only if appropriate political, economic, social and labour mechanisms were established to guarantee the rights of all workers. That could be achieved through broad social consultations between workers, employers and the Government. The main challenge was reconciling economic growth with social progress.

55. ILO supported equal opportunity of employment as a human right and a prerequisite for attaining real democracy, as a question of social justice and poverty alleviation, and as an imperative for economic and social development. ILO was taking part in the work of the United Nations system aimed at achieving full equality for women before the dawn of a new century. In that regard, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, both to be held in 1995, would represent milestones along the path to equality.

AGENDA ITEM 108: RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued)

(b) EFFECTIVE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH AUTONOMY (continued) (A/C.3/48/L.17 and L.25)

56. Mr. SUTOYO (Indonesia), introducing the proposed amendment in document A/C.3/48/L.25 to draft decision A/C.3/48/L.17 on behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the amendment was a compromise text following a long and intensive debate by the open-ended working group on human rights of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement. He hoped that the amendment would be acceptable to all delegations.

57. Ms. FENG Cui (China) said that her delegation wished to join in sponsoring the amendment.

AGENDA ITEM 110: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)
(A/C.3/48/L.9/Rev.1 and L.20/Rev.1)

58. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Cuba), introducing the proposed revised amendments in document A/C.3/48/L.20/Rev.1 to draft resolution A/C.3/48/L.9/Rev.1, said that the amendments were the result of broad consultations aimed at meeting the legitimate concerns of many delegations. The amendments would improve the text and make it easier for the draft resolution to enjoy broad acceptance.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
31st meeting
held on
Friday, 12 November 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. KUKAN	(Slovakia)
later:	Ms. AL-HAMAMI (Vice-Chairman)	(Yemen)
later:	Mr. KUKAN	(Slovakia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/48/3 (chap. VII.C), A/48/38, A/48/98, A/48/124-S/25506, A/48/182, A/48/187-E/1993/76, A/48/279, A/48/301, A/48/338, A/48/354, A/48/359, A/48/413, A/48/513, A/48/546; A/C.3/48/L.5)

1. Ms. MUPURUA (Namibia) said that, as her Government viewed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as an ample instrument for combating gender disparity and bringing about the participation of women in development, it had acceded to it without any reservations. To ensure the widest possible awareness and support for the Convention, a comprehensive three-year national strategy had been developed to prioritize the areas of greatest need for the promotion of gender relations such as dissemination of information, education and capacity-building. The strategy had helped to accentuate gender activities in Namibia and to provide a planning framework for the future.

2. As social and economic inequity culminated in violence against women, the problem of violence could not be solved in isolation from overall development constraints. In that connection, Namibia had established a Centre for Abused Children and Mothers the primary task of which was to receive and counsel women and children in difficulties arising from molestation, abuse and rape. The assistance provided by the Centre included overnight shelter, medical treatment and remedial proceedings. She expressed her Government's appreciation for the valuable assistance rendered by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to sustain the Centre.

3. Following Namibia's attainment of independence, a Law Reform Commission had been established to review all existing legislation so as to ensure compliance with the Constitution. The Women and Law Subcommittee was examining all legislation with reference to women so as to remove all discriminatory gender legislation. Those efforts were beginning to bear fruit.

4. She welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/48/187). Owing to the lack of facilities in rural areas, urban migration had been on the increase. In current rural Africa, many families were headed by women but some traditional practices limited women's access to land. While women were the major contributors to food production, they were often excluded from decision-making and projects aimed at improving their situation were not integrated into national development plans. The forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development were relevant platforms for addressing the situation of women at the grass-roots level. Furthermore, the Fourth World Conference on Women should afford women at that level the opportunity to impart their knowledge and share their experience. International solidarity would therefore be indispensable to enable such women to participate fully in the Conference.

5. Mr. MORAN (Canada), speaking on behalf of the Governments of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, said that while the United Nations system played a key role in the development of policies to advance the status of women around

(Mr. Moran, Canada)

the world and was active in promoting the principles of equality and of equal opportunity at the global level, it was deplorable to note that it underutilized the talents of half of the world's population. To be truly effective, the United Nations must reflect the principles which it advocated globally in its own composition and organization.

6. Experience in the three countries had shown that visible commitment from the top of any organization was a key to the success of efforts to improve the position of women in decision-making. While the recent initiatives of the Secretary-General, including the appointment of women to senior positions, were commendable, his recent report (A/48/513) demonstrated that the Organization was still far from a rate of appointment that would allow it to meet the targets set for 1995 under the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 adopted at the Third World Conference on Women. The current rate of increase of women at the most senior levels was insufficient and the three countries would be looking for more women to break through the so-called "glass ceiling" with a rapidity that reflected the Secretary-General's commitment to the objective of parity. Further action was needed to meet existing targets. The continued low representation of women at the most senior levels called for the creation of a unit within the Secretariat dedicated to monitoring and facilitating progress on the 1995 Action Programme.

7. While the initiatives contained in the Platform for Action focused primarily on the issues of recruitment, placement and promotion and, as such, made a practical contribution to meeting the goals established for the advancement of women in the United Nations Secretariat, there were other factors involved in creating an environment conducive to attracting and retaining competent women. Sexual harassment and measures to meet the needs of workers with family responsibilities were two such factors.

8. In that regard, the administrative instruction on procedures for dealing with sexual harassment was an important step in addressing that problem; it would also be a good idea to design measures to prevent sexual harassment in addition to dealing with cases once they had occurred.

9. Another area where there was a real need for further action related to making the United Nations more responsive to the needs of workers with family responsibilities. Human resource policies that allowed for the balancing of work and family commitments would help to reduce some of the barriers to women entering into and progressing up the ladder within the Secretariat. Such policies would foster employee retention, thus maximizing the Organization's investment in its skills base.

10. The Secretary-General should give greater attention to issues such as flexible working hours, child-care arrangements, access to training and career break schemes. Since women were most often the ones called upon to shoulder the burden of managing family responsibilities, making adjustments which recognized that fact would contribute considerably to the United Nations ongoing efforts to increase the number of women in senior positions within the Secretariat. He hoped that the resolution introduced by the three countries on the promotion and advancement of women in the Secretariat would receive broad co-sponsorship.

11. Mr. WESTERBERG (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the role of women was decisive in all the issues dealt with by the forthcoming United Nations conferences. Social and economic development could not be achieved without the advancement and contribution of women nor their participation in decision-making. Human rights, to be truly universal, must include women's equal enjoyment of those rights. Population issues must be permeated by a clear gender dimension with reproductive choice at the centre of any strategy in family planning.

12. In order for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be successful, it was crucial that sufficient regular budgetary resources be allocated to it. Sufficient resources must also be provided for the Commission on the Status of Women to accomplish its role in the preparatory work as well as for the local and regional preparations. It was also important for the least developed among the developing countries to be able to participate fully in the Conference and its preparations.

13. Special attention should be given to the situation of disabled and indigenous women. Member States should support activities aimed at making such women visible in international efforts.

14. Nordic women had achieved results regarding their representation in the political decision-making forums. However, many fortresses of power were still kept by men only both in the political and, especially, in the economic field. The equal status policy in the Nordic countries was concerned with mobilizing men's participation at home. Women could not fully advance on the labour market or in decision-making unless men helped to shoulder the burden involved in child-rearing and household chores. It was also important for employers and employees to cooperate in developing specific strategies so as to reconcile working life with family life.

15. One of the major obstacles to equality between men and women world wide was sexual assault, in both private and public. The proportions of that violence had been concealed, particularly violence committed in the family which only in the past decade had been recognized as a major problem deserving priority on the national and international agendas. In that connection, the Nordic countries supported the draft declaration on violence against women soon to be adopted by the General Assembly. Its adoption would constitute a cornerstone in the necessary work of eliminating violence against women, whenever and wherever it occurred.

16. There was an urgent need to prosecute perpetrators of sexual war crimes such as those committed in the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations peace-keeping forces had an important role to play in helping to prevent rape and other abuses of women in armed conflicts, and in making known allegations of such war crimes.

17. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights was an important step forward in the promotion of and respect for the human rights of women. The Nordic countries strongly supported the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women.

(Mr. Westerberg, Sweden)

18. The human rights of women must be integrated into the mainstream of the United Nations system-wide activities. Women's human rights must be regularly and systematically addressed in relevant United Nations organs and mechanisms. All treaty bodies and special rapporteurs should pay increased attention to human rights abuses against women and include gender-specific information and analysis in their work. The full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was being undermined by the significant number of reservations which were contrary to international treaty law. Such reservations must not be used as a means to evade treaty obligations.

19. The United Nations must shoulder its responsibility and leadership with respect to efforts to ensure equality in its own workplace. The equal sharing of power between men and women in general in society was the main key to success in all equality-promoting work and a benefit for society as a whole. While the Secretary-General's commitment to bring the balance in policy-making positions in the Secretariat as close to parity as possible by 1995 and his initiative to deal with the problem of sexual harassment were noteworthy, renewed action was nevertheless required to increase the number of women in the Secretariat.

20. The empowering of women in all sectors of society must be given priority at both the national and international levels. No sustainable development was possible without the active participation of both men and women. The enormous potential of women in developing countries had still not been fully recognized and women still belonged to the poorest segments of their societies. Empowerment should also involve alleviating poor women's domestic workload, providing access to health and family-planning services as well as to education and promoting women's legal and political rights. Stereotypical attitudes and prejudices on men's and women's roles in society were barriers to the advancement of women all over the world.

21. Ms. DOHNAL (Austria) said that finalization of the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) was a major step towards enforcement of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women; it clearly affirmed violence against women as a major obstacle in their lives and also dealt with the different forms of such violence. Most importantly, it set forth the obligation of States in that area. Austria attached particular priority to protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms with regard to women, as demonstrated by its commitment to combating the pattern of violence and discrimination against them in its own society. Recalling that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the recent World Conference on Human Rights, addressed the gender-specific dimension of human rights violations, she expressed confidence that the United Nations would include a gender-sensitive approach in its human rights mechanisms.

22. As a particularly horrifying aspect of the human rights violations perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia, crimes of sexual violence were being documented by the Commission of Experts created under Security Council resolution 780 (1992). She welcomed the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former

(Ms. Dohnal, Austria)

Yugoslavia since 1991, and assumed that sexual violence against women would form one of its primary concerns. In that connection, she also welcomed the cooperation between the Commission of Experts and women's organizations, which had experience of such matters, and emphasized the need to intensify the exchange of ideas.

23. Only careful preparation would ensure fulfilment of the expectations placed in the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. With that in mind, Austria had offered to host the European preparatory conference in Vienna in 1994. The preparatory meeting for the Platform of Action in the form of an inter-sessional working group of the Commission on the Status of Women should also be carefully prepared; relevant documentation and an exact timetable would be of help.

24. Finally, she hoped that the structural reform and redefinition of United Nations policy would further promote equality, development and peace by mainstreaming women's issues and strengthening the relevant agencies. Ensuring that it was at the forefront of a policy towards de facto equality would be a crucial test for the future United Nations system.

25. Ms. TIDSWELL (New Zealand) said that the 1993 celebrations marking the first centennial of women's suffrage in New Zealand had provided the opportunity to assess the present status of women and measures for enhancing the considerable progress already made towards attainment of true gender equality in her country. At the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, gender issues had been affirmed as a central item on the global human rights agenda. New Zealand welcomed the clear objectives set forth in the Vienna Declaration and applauded its commitment to eradicating gender discrimination.

26. Notwithstanding the highlights of 1993, women continued to be marginalized world wide and to face serious obstacles to the enjoyment of their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. As for the persistent violence against women, adoption of the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women (A/C.3/48/L.5) would clearly signal that such behaviour was unacceptable. New Zealand supported the declaration, which it had helped to formulate, as a practical measure in eliminating a fundamental human rights abuse suffered by women. It also looked forward to the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women.

27. The relevant United Nations bodies and mechanisms should incorporate gender analysis into their work on a wider scale, a point which was forcefully made in the Vienna Declaration. That crucial process of mainstreaming women's issues required close cooperation between the agencies concerned. At organizational level, the United Nations should ensure that its women's human rights programme was successfully restructured. The proposed merger between UNIFEM and INSTRAW, for instance, clearly required close consideration which catered for the views of all parties and took into account the financial implications. As her delegation was not yet persuaded that a satisfactory case for merger had been made, it would carefully examine the Secretary-General's report on the subject. In so doing, it would bear in mind that any restructuring should not further reduce the resources available for activities relating to women, particularly since these were vital in the lead-up to the 1995 World Conference on Women.

(Ms. Tidswell, New Zealand)

28. The said Conference would provide an opportunity to appraise implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000. Hopefully, it would also give special attention to increasing women's participation in decision-making and produce a results-oriented platform of action. The inter-sessional working group planned for 1994 would be a useful exercise. The success of the Conference would depend on thorough preparation, in which New Zealand would be involved. The participation of regional organizations, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organizations would also be beneficial.

29. Finally, improving the status of women globally should be seen in the context of overall socio-economic development. In that sense, acknowledgement of women's skills and capabilities was critical to the broader goals of the United Nations.

30. Ms. Al-Hamami (Yemen), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

31. Mrs. ESCHENKO (Ukraine) said that one of the most important results of the World Conference on Human Rights was recognition of the rights of women as an inalienable part of human rights and that discrimination and violence directed against women constituted human-rights violations. Progress made with regard to the rights of women at the Conference had, to a large extent, been due to the efforts of women's non-governmental organizations. Her delegation supported Commission on the Status of Women resolution 37/7 on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women and urged the States that had not yet done so to establish national committees speedily for that purpose. Ukraine had set up such a committee in March 1993 and welcomed the holding of the European Regional Preparatory Meeting in October 1994 with broad participation of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

32. Her delegation shared the general concern expressed about violence against women, particularly during armed conflicts, and endorsed the adoption of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/46, which condemned all acts of violence and violations of human rights directed specifically against women and decided to consider the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women. She hoped that at its current session the General Assembly would adopt the draft declaration on violence against women.

33. In Ukraine, as in other countries with transitional economies, the prospects for solving the problems of women were very unfavourable. Most of those problems were the results of policies under the previous government and the centralized economy. Her country's low birth rate was to a large extent caused by the large number of women employed in production, an undeveloped social welfare infrastructure and social and economic instability.

34. In July 1992, her Government had drawn up a long-term policy programme to enhance the status of women, assist families, and improve the health of mothers and children. The programme provided for a number of specific measures aimed at, inter alia, organizing women's work schedules, ensuring social protection, and enabling women to adapt during the transition to a market economy. That programme and the State family-planning programme were based on provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(Mrs. Eschenko, Ukraine)

and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Implementation of those two programmes, however, was being delayed because of the limited financial and material resources available for that purpose.

35. In the search for new conceptual approaches to solving the problems of women, Ukraine sought to make use of experience acquired in the field of social protection of women by adapting it to new economic conditions and at the same time believed that excessive State assistance had a negative effect on recipients. Her country therefore considered it very important at the current time to take punctual measures to protect vulnerable groups of women and also promote entrepreneurship among women in order to involve them in the development process and the political life of the State. Ukraine was particularly interested in the preparations for the Fourth World Conference and subsequent cooperation with international organizations in ensuring the rights of women.

36. Mrs. COMAROSCHI (Romania) said that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies showed internationally the challenges resulting from the political changes and the need to find optimum methods of implementing United Nations strategies for eliminating discrimination against women. Romania was committed to participating in all the designs for tackling the problems relating to women's advancement and human rights. However, despite the instruments for respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, women had not yet achieved equal status in society. Concerted efforts were therefore needed to ensure greater collaboration between the United Nations and outside bodies. Non-governmental organizations could contribute towards international action intended to eliminate all traditional forms of discrimination.

37. The prerequisites needed for the equal socio-economic development of women were access to education, professional training and employment, which were a first step towards women exercising their civil and political rights, participating in decision-making and sharing communal responsibilities. In the broader context, however, human rights and fundamental freedoms, of which women's rights were part, could be guaranteed only by building democracy, the rule of law, economic development and a stable political climate.

38. In Romania, the post-1989 transition period had generated a social crisis in all sectors of society; the status of women had been inevitably affected, both socially and economically. None the less, the legal basis for ensuring the promotion of equal opportunities for women did exist, and Romania's accession to various international human rights instruments had led to the repeal, amendment and adoption of laws. Its Constitution also safeguarded equal rights for all citizens, without discrimination. Even so, however, women's rights were not always protected and observed, although dialogue with trade unions and non-governmental organizations had been instituted with a view to enhancing the participation of women at all levels of society. In 1990, Romania had also withdrawn its reservation to article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it had ratified in 1982.

39. Despite the progress made in the advancement of women, additional effort was still required to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies; the 1995 World Conference on Women should provide impetus in that sense. Finally, her

(Mrs. Comaroschi, Romania)

delegation reaffirmed its support for the constant initiatives aimed to enhance the advancement, value and dignity of women.

40. Mr. ALBIN (Mexico), speaking also on behalf of Colombia and Venezuela, stressed the urgent need for the Organization to step up its efforts to reverse the effects of structural adjustments in the social sectors of most developing countries. One of the most important achievements of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights was recognition of the rights of women as an inalienable and integral part of universal human rights. Implementation of national legislation and international human rights instruments, however, had still not led to greater opportunities for women. Many problems, including the growth of extreme poverty, increased violence against women, their limited participation in decision-making processes and the emergency situation of women in armed conflicts, must be analysed and remedied. The Vienna Conference had underscored the importance of eliminating violence and all forms of harassment against women. The draft declaration on violence against women, to be adopted at the current session of the General Assembly, would be an important contribution for dealing with that problem.

41. The Fourth World Conference on Women would be an opportunity to create real solutions to the problems confronting women. It was a matter of concern that many countries had still not designated national committees to carry out preparations for the Conference. States which had not yet done so should take immediate steps to mobilize support for the Conference. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies should be the starting-point for action and setting up mechanisms to achieve better results. Implementation of the Strategies was still the main objective in promoting the advancement of women. The report on that subject to be submitted to the Conference should analyse in depth and explain why there had been only partial progress and, in some respects, movement backward. The stepped-up implementation of the Strategies was closely linked to the new concept of the roles to be played by men and women in society. In that connection, equality between men and women must be based on human dignity.

42. The Platform for Action to be adopted at the Fourth World Conference should include innovative proposals that would have a positive impact on governmental policies and the activities of non-governmental organizations. The Governments of Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela were prepared to put forward specific proposals concerning that document. Dissemination of information on the Conference should have the support of all relevant United Nations bodies, Governments and non-governmental organizations. There was a need to design an information campaign with activities involving all sectors of society. The non-governmental organizations dealing with women's questions should participate in the preparatory process in the same way as they would for the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development.

43. Special consideration should be given to the need for effective coordination between the various United Nations bodies in that field. In the light of the results achieved at the Beijing Conference, a careful review of existing structures should be carried out in order to strengthen inter-institutional coordination.

(Mr. Albin, Mexico)

44. Lastly, it was regrettable that the report of the Secretary-General on the proposal to merge INSTRAW and UNIFEM had not been submitted on time for consideration by the Committee. That was a delicate matter which required careful analysis. The General Assembly should have all the information necessary for considering the merits of the proposal before taking a definitive decision.

45. Mr. LINDGRAVEN ALVES (Brazil) said that as the end of the century approached, Governments and societies had to define ways to achieve the three main objectives of the Nairobi Conference on Women: equality, development and peace. The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 would provide an opportunity to appraise past accomplishments and set new priorities.

46. It was very difficult to achieve real change and progress in social and economic sectors in an unstable, unfair and violent context. Despite the advancements women had achieved over the past two decades, the progressive deterioration of international economic relations had hindered their economic and social development. Notwithstanding economic restraints, the strengthening of democratic institutions in Brazil had enabled women there gradually to overcome certain cultural prejudices and achieve greater participation in social, economic and legal fields. Women's organizations had expanded over the past 20 years and were particularly active in the legal sphere.

47. His delegation had played an active role in preparing the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women and viewed its adoption by the General Assembly as an important step in the promotion and protection of women's rights internationally. Violence against women was one of the gravest violations of human rights and a serious obstacle to the complete integration of women in society. His delegation strongly supported the proposal that the Commission on Human Rights should establish a special rapporteur to deal specifically with the problem of violence against women. Brazil had been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 1984 and had submitted a proposal for the withdrawal of all reservations to the Convention to its Parliament.

48. His Government had established a national committee to coordinate activities for the Fourth World Conference on Women, prepare a national report for the Conference and mobilize public opinion on women's issues throughout the country. As for previous world conferences, and in preparation of the World Conference on Population and Development in 1994, his Government would continue to work in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

49. Mr. Kukan (Slovakia) resumed the Chair.

50. Mrs. SCHEMBRI ORLAND (Malta) noted that most women were still victims of abuse, rape, domestic and sexual violence and gender discrimination simply because they were women. Gender issues needed constant assessment and investigation. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, each member State would address the key themes of equality, development and peace and their relevance within national policy. That Conference should examine plans of action in light of their effectiveness within a larger perspective of social, political and economic dynamics.

(Mrs. Schembri Orland, Malta)

51. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was a human rights document that manifested an initial commitment of the ratifying State and strengthened democratic institutions. While it was desirable to attract ratification of the Convention, the reservations made by a number of States should be re-examined, and ways should be found to rechannel States' commitment to equality, even in those areas. The Convention should be linked to other important human rights documents, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

52. Countries should be assisted in the formulation of national policies on women. National machineries, set up to incorporate those policies into national development plans, should have an administrative status senior enough to allow them to press for reforms and to cope with the new problems facing women, inter alia, economic decline and poverty, AIDS, environmental and political participation, trafficking in women and media exploitation. National and international financing policies should be formulated with regard to their impact on women and on their living standards and should address demographic issues and shifts in the nuclear family producing single-parent families headed by women. Partnership between women and men in development was essential in formulating national policies.

53. Violence against women should be a central focus of the 1995 Conference. Her delegation endorsed the draft declaration on the elimination of violence against women. An important consideration was criminalization of violent conduct, such as domestic violence which was not always treated as a crime. Criminalization should be accompanied by an improvement of the status and rights of the victim in criminal law. In that respect, the role of the media was crucial as a primary activator of social change. In Malta, the problem of domestic violence had only recently been the focus of public debate and the Government was tackling that issue with a multidisciplinary approach. In pursuing the objective to create a caring society, her Government had initiated improved procedures and structures for the delivery of key social services. Victims of domestic violence, teenage mothers and single parents would be among those to benefit from such measures.

54. While progress had been made since the First World Conference on Women, the persistence of acts of violence against women world wide was a tragic paradox which negated fundamental human rights. The development of a society based on a partnership of men and women, equal in dignity, should be the ultimate goal.

55. Mr. RATUNACEVA (Fiji) said that women played a significant role in his country's economy, at the subsistence level and in the manufacturing and service sectors. Their participation in the labour force was increasing steadily owing to wider employment opportunities, the increased number of women with educational qualifications and economic necessity. Between 1976 and 1986, the number of women in the "economically active" category and among the self-employed had grown. Although more women were entering the labour force, most were in the primary sector and lower occupational levels. In the past 10 years, women had slowly attained administrative and managerial positions in the professional and technical fields. The slow rate of progress was attributed to women's choice of traditional "female" occupations, stiff competition from

(Mr. Ratunaceva, Fiji)

equally well-qualified males, stringent selection criteria, and prevailing social attitudes favouring males for recruitment and promotion.

56. Most of the female labour force was engaged in the informal sector and not covered by labour regulations. The Government sought to encourage women's participation in "mainstream" economic activities and improve their access to services which would increase their productivity. More resources would be devoted to technical and vocational education to improve their occupational skills.

57. Women's health had vastly improved over the years in Fiji and the survival rate and life expectancy for women were higher than those for men. The national health policy was geared towards ensuring maternal health. The maternal and child health services were an integral part of the primary and preventive health-care programme and focused specifically on women's reproductive and nurturing roles. His country's family-planning programme had also helped improve the lives of women. Although Fiji had not acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, it had, nevertheless, implemented many of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

58. Mrs. KOURULA (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that her office placed high priority on ensuring that its protection and assistance activities reached refugee women, who made up the majority of the adult refugee population and many of whom were single heads of families. Four years earlier UNHCR had initiated a process aimed at ensuring that the specific needs of refugee women were taken into account at all stages of the Office's involvement. The process integrated a series of activities including development of a clear policy framework, drafting of operational guidelines, strategic placement of specialized staff, gender-training programmes for staff, legal advocacy and cooperation with other United Nations organizations.

59. The most difficult stage of ensuring a gender focus in UNHCR interventions was the emergency phase, where large numbers of refugees had crossed a border and were in desperate need of protection and basic assistance. The establishment of a support infrastructure was a primary concern. The Office had taken steps to improve gender-sensitive emergency response to meet the specific needs of refugee women. Stand-by arrangements had been instituted to ensure rapid mobilization of social-services officers at the early stages of an emergency. Once a refugee situation stabilized, UNHCR continued to provide basic services and encouraged literacy and skills training, trauma counselling, leadership and legal awareness training for women.

60. When repatriating refugees, UNHCR had endeavoured to ensure that women's specific situation was addressed in planning and coordination with development agencies. UNHCR had worked together with other United Nations bodies in Central America and Cambodia in planning the reintegration of uprooted women. As women faced particular problems when applying for refugee status, UNHCR was training officials, responsible for determination procedures, to ensure that women had access to a fair interview process that took into account cross-cultural factors. Authorities of resettlement countries were made fully aware of

(Mrs. Kourula)

specific factors which might have a bearing in the determination of a women's application for refugee status.

61. Refugee women were especially vulnerable to exploitation and sexual violence. Such widely publicized horrors, as those in former Yugoslavia, went virtually unnoticed in other parts of the world. UNHCR had actively addressed those abuses, documenting them and calling for remedial action. UNHCR's Executive Committee had called on States to adopt concrete measures to prevent sexual violence and define specific remedial activities. UNHCR had also participated in other forums to raise awareness of the situation of refugee women. It was essential that the concerns of uprooted women should be included in the agenda of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.

62. Ms. BREINES (UNESCO) said that women continued to be a priority target group of UNESCO, together with the least developed countries and Africa. UNESCO was actively involved in promoting equality between women and men by giving top priority to basic education on literacy for girls and women, by promoting women's access to vocational training and scientific and technical education, by involving women in the process of democratization and development and by helping to universalize women's rights and to combat violence against women.

63. As UNESCO's budget was limited, some of its activities were made possible through its partnership with other international or national bodies. However, the share of UNESCO's regular budget allocated to women's specific activities had substantially increased. For many years, UNESCO had pursued a dual approach to gender-related issues which involved specific women's projects and programmes, and integrated women's needs into all planning implementation and evaluation. The current underutilization of women's skills and potential was a waste of human resources, detrimental to the individual and to the development of society. It was vital for full use to be made of women's experience and expertise in meeting major world challenges.

64. The Fourth World Conference on Women would provide an opportunity to evaluate past achievements and improve UNESCO's activities. UNESCO appreciated the strategy of the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ms. Mongella, which stressed the need to look forward and draw strength from diversity. UNESCO would bring to the 1995 Conference data, description and analysis of the situation of women in different parts of the world in the areas of education, science, culture and development. The eradication of illiteracy among girls and women required long-term commitment by international organizations, Governments and professionals, and was the single most effective factor for change towards development with a human face. Literacy was a vital step towards full participation in the democratic process and in decision-making.

65. UNESCO estimated that, if current trends continued, the number of illiterates would fall very little during the 1990s. There would be some progress in East Asia, and to a lesser degree in Latin America and the Caribbean. UNESCO continued to promote regional educational programmes for the eradication of illiteracy and had launched new projects in many parts of the world. Yet, in spite of its priority status, the education of girls and women still lagged behind that of boys and men in most countries. The current

(Ms. Breines, UNESCO)

situation challenged the notion of justice and development and, ultimately, peace. Real security required a well-educated world population.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.